

Islamism and jihadism the challenge for trump

Islamism and Jihadism: The Challenge and the Threat for Trump

(Cliff May, May 17, 2017)

Transcript available below

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About the speaker

Clifford D. May is the founder and President of the [Foundation for Defense of Democracies](#), a nonpartisan policy institute focusing on national security created immediately following the 9/11/01 attacks on the United States.

Under his leadership, FDD has become one of the nation's most highly regarded think tanks and a sought-after voice on a wide range of national security issues. He has helped assemble a staff and advisory board of the most compelling scholars and experts whose research, ideas, and recommendations have shaped important policies and legislation on terrorism, nonproliferation, human rights, Islamism, democratization, and related issues.

Cliff has had a long and distinguished career in international relations, journalism, communications, and politics. A veteran news reporter, foreign correspondent and editor (at The New York Times and other publications), he has covered stories around the world, including datelines from Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Israel, the West Bank, Jordan, Egypt, Turkey, the U.A.E., Bahrain, Oman, Sudan, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Chad, Mexico, Argentina, Northern Ireland, Kazakhstan, China, and Russia.

From 2016 to 2018, Cliff served as a commissioner on the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), an independent, bipartisan U.S. federal government commission that makes policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State, and Congress in order to advance the pivotal right of religious freedom around the world, and integrate religious freedom into America's foreign policy.

Transcript

Introduction

Robert R. Reilly:

It is a particular delight to welcome Cliff May here, whom I have known for some years. He, as you know, is the founder and President of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a group which has become one of the most important public policy think tanks in Washington through its articles, through its policy papers, through its seminars, through its conferences. Just an example from today one of the senior scholars, Reuel Marc Gerecht, had a piece in the Wall Street Journal, a very insightful piece, about whom we should wish to have win in the Iranian presidential election.

I would say that it is a measure of what Cliff May has achieved that Foundation for Defense of Democracy has one of the best lineups of scholars in Washington and I think that is why this organization hits over its weight class compared to some other public policy groups that have far larger staffs and budgets but a lot gets done in FDD.

One reason is because of Cliff's background. He was for quite some years a *New York Times* reporter. He is in recovery, but it gave him intimate knowledge of the world. He covered events in- had his dateline from Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Israel, West Bank, Jordan, Turkey. You get the general picture there. He has a weekly column in *The Washington Times* called Foreign Desk.

Cliff is serving as a commissioner on the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, which just had an important meeting today in releasing their annual report. He was nominated to serve on the Broadcasting Board of Governors, but I just told him how lucky he was that he was never confirmed. Someone laughed who knows why. And he has served on the bipartisan advisory Committee on Democracy Promotion. He was appointed a senior advisor to the Iraq Study Group.

I don't know whether should- Well, that recommends you. Can I tell the joke about the baggage claim in Yemen?

Clifford May:

Please.

Robert R. Reilly:

Okay, so in 2009, at the end of 2009, Cliff May suggested releasing the detainees from Guantanamo to Yemen and then sending missile strikes to the baggage claim area. This caused some acute criticism from other areas of the press whom Cliff then characterized as humorless. So please join me in welcoming Cliff May, who is speaking on, "Islamism and Jihadism: The Challenge and the Threat for President Trump."

Introduction

Clifford May:

Well thank you, Bob. I've been a great admirer of Bob's for so many years and we've known each other not as well as I'd like to but thank you so much. Thank you for inviting me. Thanks to all of you for coming out to see me on a warm night. There are more fun things that you could do but you decided not to. So I'm pleased that you're here.

I really do appreciate that fine introduction. It is interesting that you started with a joke because I have to say when I get up on a podium, I tend to feel like you got to break the ice and relax people a little bit and so you should kind of tell some kind of joke. And I shared this with a guy I happen to know who is trying to make a living as a standup comic and he said that is really strange because every time I get up to do a standup routine, I feel like I should start with a policy brief. Which does remind me of a story. Hopefully, I hope this is not apocryphal, but you may or may not have heard. It was a meeting between John Major, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, and Boris Yeltsin, just after he had become President of the Russian Federation. And John Major said to Boris, "Yeltsin Boris Nikolayevich, you know now that there is not a **Soviet Union**, I am curious could you describe in a word, how are things going in Russia?" And Boris Yeltsin said, "Good." And John Major felt a little awkward about that. He said, "Yeltsin Nikolayevich, you know the phrase 'in a word' is a figure of speech. I wonder- Perhaps you could elaborate just a bit." And Boris Yeltsin said, "Not good."

The Threat Today

So similarly, if you ask me to summarize how the United States is doing a hundred odd days after the inauguration of a new President – and they have been kind of odd days, right? That is not a criticism. It is just an observation. I would say good, but if you asked me to elaborate, I would say not good. Good because look, we are not in a depression and our sworn enemies do not have nuclear weapons yet, but the world is in considerable turmoil.

President Obama's various foreign policy experiments – the reset with Russia, the nuclear deal with Iran, his outreach to Muslim countries and his early and special friendship with Turkey's Erdogan, his pivot to Asia, his opening to Cuba – these initiatives did not produce the results one might have hoped for.

North Korea

North Korea today is ruled by a loony, fat kid with a bad haircut and nuclear weapons, and missiles, whose range his rocket scientists are attempting to expand every day. North Korea is a can that has been kicked down the road by a string of administrations since 1994 when President Clinton concluded the Agreed Framework, you remember with Kim's father, that was supposed to prevent North Korea from going nuclear. It did not.

Iran

How is that different from the deal that President Obama concluded with Iran? Well, the Iran Deal is not meant to stop Iran from becoming a nuclear armed power. It is only meant to slow its progress. While we do what exactly? Iran was once a great imperial power. Its ambition is to be one again.

Turkey

The same may be said of Turkey and of China and of Russia. Not one of these Eurasian nations – I think they are all Eurasian nations – is free and democratic. Not one is trending in that direction. Not one is a friend of America, though Turkey is a member of NATO, so officially, it is our ally. That is a paradox and it is a dilemma.

I do not have enough time today to talk about all of America's national security concerns, so I am going to focus on the one I consider the most challenging, the one that too many world leaders, too many academics, too many journalists are most reluctant to discuss forthrightly; the Islamist and jihadist threat. When we have our Q&A afterwards, I will talk about whatever you like, but I am going to focus on that and get into the weeds a bit.

Islamism and jihadism are on the rise not just in the Middle East, as I think most of you know, but also in Europe, also in Asia, and also in Latin America. Iddi has been doing some research on specifically that and we did a congressional testimony, one of our scholars, last week on that. The penetration is much greater than you might expect.

What is the difference in my view between Islamism and jihadism? What is the distinction I am making? Both embrace the imperative of Islamic supremacy and domination, but whereas jihadists believe that such domination can only be achieved through the sword, through warfare, Islamists are willing to achieve their goals through less bellicose means as

well, for example, through elections. So while all jihadists are Islamists, not all Islamists are jihadists, but both I would argue represent serious threats to us. And we do not have and never have had yet a coherent and comprehensive strategy to defeat those ideologies and those motivated by them.

Actually, it is a little worse than that. I want you to imagine that Bob had invited me here on September 12, 2001, and imagine that I came here and I said here is my prediction today: within less than twenty years the United States will be giving billions of dollars and a path to nuclear weapons acquisition to the leading state sponsor of terrorism in the world, according to us, according to the U.S. government. Well, you would have said I am crazy. Bob would not have invited me back. Bye-bye, but I would have been right if I had come here in 2001 and I had predicted that. That is where we are.

As for President Trump, again, good and not good. I do not think he studied or thought deeply about national security and foreign policy. I do not think he knows much about history. That is an observation, not a criticism, but I also think he has put together an astonishingly good national security team; James Mattis at the Pentagon, H.R. McMaster as National Security Advisor, Mike Pompeo, wonderful guy, over at CIA. Nikki Haley at the United Nations, I am startled by what a fast learner she is. John Kelly at DHS, at Homeland Security, [is] tremendous.

So, if you asked me to sum up not in a word, but let us say three words, what should be America's strategic doctrine in response to these threats? I would say peace through strength, not peace through conflict resolution, not peace through win-win scenarios, certainly not peace through appeasement or the international community, which has all the reality of the tooth fairy, not peace through weakness, not peace through mutually assured destruction.

America's military might, its cyber capabilities (both defensive and offensive), its missile defense systems, our economy all need to be as strong as possible, much stronger than they are right now. We need to be not just maintaining our leads in these realms, we need to be increasing them. All of the instrumentalities of American power need to be utilized if we are to win the war being waged against America and the West. This must be our priority. It cannot be an afterthought. It cannot come in second or third.

We need to take the fight to our enemies. They should not be allowed to plot against us in comfort and safety. We want or we should want them to be awed and daunted. It is not enough to say we will prevail in the end.

Our enemies should conclude that challenging us is a fool's errand. That should be the perception and that should be the reality. At the moment it is not. There are big holes in America's military readiness, and we have not been adequately modernizing. Nor do we have a serious communications capability as you know only too well, Robert.

In Congressional testimony last week – I do not know if you saw this – former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper said he favors a USIA, United States Information Agency, on steroids to counter message jihadism as well as Russia's robust propaganda campaign. He is right, but why did he not voice that opinion during all the years he was working for President Obama.

So, that is the gist of my argument.

About the Foundation for Defense of Democracies

What I am going to do now is elaborate, more than two words, point out what I see as the most important dots, and make an attempt to connect them. I am going to begin with just a few words about the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, the policy institute or to use the vernacular the think tank that as Bob mentioned I founded and where I still serve as President.

It was created right after 9/11, but interestingly the people who helped me bring it into existence, extraordinary names you will know, my interns never do. In particular, Jeanne Kirkpatrick and Jack Kemp. It is great to be some place where I do not have to tell people who they are. [They] were worried about terrorism and the forces driving and justifying terrorism earlier than 9/11. In fact, believe it or not, it was less than a week when they came in and I had a meeting with them, a consultation intended to help them flesh out some of their ideas.

There had been at that point a string of attacks on Americans that they recognized, Beirut in 1983, the World Trade Center in 1993, Khobar Towers in 1996, two African embassies in 1998, the USS Cole in 2000. There were a lot of others that are less well known that they were aware of, and also, by the way, in 2001 and 2002, Israel was being hit by one suicide bomber after another with too few people inside the international community condemning those attacks, so their question was: is there a pattern here, is anyone seriously attempting to understand what is going on and to formulate strategies and policies to address it? So, I took copious notes, and I went home to think about our conversation, and think [about] how I would do this little bit of research for them. And a few days

later, the attacks of 9/11 took place.

Now, what happened that day is often described as a tragedy, but a tragedy is when you get hit by a hurricane or a tornado. This was an atrocity. It was an atrocity carried about by terrorists based on beliefs, based on an ideology, so I met with them again and I said boy, what you feared and anticipated has now come to pass, has it not? And from that a decision was made to create an organization that would take a hard look at what was happening in the world, by whom and why, with the aim of formulating options for those policymakers and legislators who wanted to defend America and its allies from sworn and mortal enemies.

FDD opened its doors fifteen years ago January. Since then, my job has essentially been to assemble the resources, the team necessary to focus on the threats represented by totalitarianism, supremacism, and militant interpretations of Islam to understand the movements, the non-state actors, and the nation-states whose legitimacy derives from these ideologies, from this theology, to help better educate political elites and the public, and finally to attempt to identify policies that can best defend America and the West.

Witnessing the Iranian Revolution

I have got to tell you that actually this subject had been on my mind for a very long time in a nebulous sort of way, and the reason is that in 1979, I was a young foreign correspondent. A revolution broke out in Iran. The Shah fled. The Ayatollah Khomeini returned from exile. I was asked to cover this by, of all people, Bill Moyers, for a TV show he had called Bill Moyers International Journal, and also CBS Radio and Hearst Newspapers – in those days, some of you are old enough to remember, Hearst Newspapers were in Los Angeles, and San Francisco, and Baltimore, and a lot of different places. Never mind all of that.

The point is I vividly recall my first glimpse of Ayatollah Khomeini. It was in the holy city of Qom. It was a windy day and the air seemed very dusty. There were thousands of people there. He lived in a very small bungalow, very modest, I have to say, with a flat roof. It did not rain much, [so] you could have a flat roof there. And we waited and waited, this small camera crew I had, my producer, my soundman. And finally, Ayatollah Khomeini appears on the roof of this little bungalow. And I have got to tell you, he was an absolutely charismatic figure: black robes, the turban, the white beard.

And he is not like an American politician. He is not waving to the crowds. He is not pointing at people. He is not having a good time. He looks like a stern father, and he just looks at the crowd for the longest time. He does not say a word, and then with one motion, maybe a benediction, I do not know, he did [a movement] like that. And the crowd went wild, cheering, and the women ululating. You all know what ululating is.

And at that point my producer, who I had met up with there, who is an Iranian, turned to me, and he said you are very lucky. And I thought to myself, what does he mean by that? And I was not sure, and I took a stab at it, and I said you know, Bijan, I am very lucky because I could have some job in some office somewhere, and instead I got a front row seat on history. I mean this is really exciting. Here I am, this is terrific. You are right, I am lucky.

And he looked at me like I was just the stupidest person he had ever met. He said you do not understand, do you? You are very lucky because in all of history, there have been only a few really great men. There was Moses, there was Jesus, there was Muhammad, and now there is Khomeini. And you are in his glorious presence. I said, oh, this is not your father's revolution.

Ibn Khaldun

Let me read you something by the famous Tunis-born Muslim historian and philosopher, Ibn Khaldun. "In the Muslim community, jihad is a religious duty because of the universalism of the Muslim mission and the obligation to convert everybody to Islam either by persuasion or by force. The other religious groups did not have a universal mission, and the jihad was not a religious duty for them, save only for purposes of defense. But Islam is under obligation to gain power over other nations."

Ibn Khaldun did not come to that conclusion because of any legitimate grievances against America or Israel. He did not come to that conclusion – some of you know the punchline of this joke, I can tell – he did not come to that conclusion because he was concerned about economic injustice or global warming. How can I be so sure? Because Ibn Khaldun died in 1406.

Today – and I want to say this clearly – most Muslims are not subscribed to this reading of Islam. Among those who do not, the Ismailis, the Ahmadis, modern Sufis, most Kurds, the Hashemites of Jordan, the

Malikis of Morocco, [and] the Ibadis of Oman. Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi is fighting jihadis every day in the Sinai. Islam has traditionally been moderate in West Africa, where I lived for a while, and in the Balkans and in the South Pacific, though, in recent years, radicals have been making serious inroads in all of these places, as you know. I will not talk about Indonesia now. I do not want to get on a sidetrack.

There are also reformist Muslims, Muslims who actively challenge the bellicose readings of Islam. They very much deserve our support. Indeed, such Muslim reformers are despised and marked for death by their radical coreligionists. Unfortunately, few Muslim reformers have either the wealth or political power in what we have come to call the Islamic world, nor in that world is it safe to speak freely, much less organize against the Islamists.

The Islamic project, as Ibn Khaldun interpreted it, began to be revived in the twentieth century soon after the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the abolition of the Islamic Caliphate. As you all know, that was in 1924. Four years later in 1928, Hassan al-Banna founded the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Remember Ibn Khaldun. He wrote, "It is the nature of Islam to dominate, not to be dominated, to impose its law on all nations, and to extend its power to the entire planet."

Sayyid Qutb

And exactly twenty years later, Sayyid Qutb arrived in the United States, also from Egypt, on a scholarship. He spent several months in Greeley, Colorado at Colorado State College, which is now the University of Northern Colorado. And from there in 1949, he published his first major work, *Social Justice in Islam*. When he returned home, by the way, he published another book, *The America I Have Seen*. It was not flattering. He talked of America's materialism, its racism, its rural boxing matches, its superficiality, its enthusiasm for sports, its support for the new state of Israel, and its animal-like mixing of the sexes, "even in churches."

I am going to read you one quote from the book, and if you require a trigger warning, consider yourself triggered, "The American girl," he wrote, "is well acquainted with her body's seductive capacity. She knows it lies in the face, and in expressive eyes, and thirsty lips. She knows seductiveness lies in the round breasts, the full buttocks, and in the shapely thighs, sleek legs — and she shows all this and does not hide it."

His writings developed Muslim Brotherhood thinking, and also fortified the theoretical and theological foundations upon which other Islamist groups would build. Qutb said there could be no mixing of Islamic law, Sharia, and democracy because Sharia is from God, Allah, and therefore perfect and comprehensive. By contrast, quoting again, "Democracy is a human system, and therefore, error-ridden and incomplete. Substituting man-made laws for God-given laws is a grave offense."

Qutb also said truth and falsehood cannot coexist on earth. The liberating struggle of jihad does not cease until all religion belongs to God. In other words, jihad does not cease until Islam dominates the world. Such views, I think it should be obvious, are not compatible with tolerance and other Western ideas and other values. There is no common ground on which to build an international community with those who take this view.

Viewing Khomeini Through Rose-Colored Glasses

So, when I arrived in Iran in 1979, I did not know any of this. I was unfamiliar with all of this history, but I have got to tell you [that] most of the other reporters I was with, who were older and more experienced than I, they did not know about this either, nor did the diplomats, even the ones who were posted there. Almost all of them chose to view Khomeini through rose-colored glasses.

Let me give you some examples.

On February 12, 1979, TIME magazine reported that Khomeini believes that Iran should become a multi-party democracy with several political parties. A *New York Times* piece predicted that the Ayatollah would provide, quote, "a desperately needed model of humane governance for a Third World country." President Jimmy Carter's UN Ambassador, Andrew Young, called Khomeini, "some kind of saint." William Sullivan, the U.S. Ambassador in Tehran, compared Khomeini to Gandhi.

Richard Falk, a Professor of International Law at Princeton, wrote in the – he has his fans here, I see – he wrote that Khomeini's close advisors are uniformly composed of moderate, progressive individuals who share a notable record of concern with human rights, resisting oppression, and promoting social justice. Anyway, [do] you think that hurt Falk's career? Let me tell you, it did not, and as you probably know, a lot of you do, in 2008, the UN Human Rights Council appointed Falk to a six-year term as UN Special Rapporteur in the Situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian-Occupied Territories Since 1967.

I was, as I said, not well-educated, but I was skeptical by nature and as a result of the fact that I had spent some time living and studying in the Soviet Union. So it seemed to me unlikely that moderates would prevail over radicals, or that true believers would be patient for long with those they regard as apostates, or that Khomeini would, in the end, tolerate dissidents, critics, or the disobedient.

And as I listened to what Khomeini was actually saying, and as I began to read what he had been writing, and he had been writing for a very long time, I saw no reason to doubt that he was both a man of faith and a very radical revolutionary. For example, here is what Ayatollah Khomeini said in a speech in 1942, '42. This speech was titled, "Islam is Not a Religion of Pacifists."

He wrote, "Those who study jihad will understand why Islam wants to conquer the whole world. Those who know nothing of Islam pretend that Islam counsels against war. Those who say this are witless. Islam says kill all the unbelievers just as they would kill you. The sword is the key to paradise, which can be opened only for holy warriors. There are hundreds of other Psalms," Qur'anic Psalms, "and hadiths," sayings of the Prophet (you all know that), "urging Muslims to value war and to fight. Does all that mean that Islam is a religion that prevents men from waging war? I spit on those foolish souls who make such a claim."

The Impact of the Iranian Revolution on the Islamic World

You could read it. It was there. Bernard Lewis, the great historian of Islam in the Middle East, who I have been privileged to know, did understand what this meant, and he said the Iranian Revolution had an immense impact on the whole Islamic world intellectually, morally, and politically. The process that began in Iran in 1979 was a revolution in the same sense as the French Revolution and the Russian Revolution. In other words, it was not an *Iranian* revolution, it was an *Islamic* revolution, and it was a *global* revolution.

An important point often overlooked or misunderstood, though Khomeini was a Shia and a Persian, his revolution also electrified Arabs and Sunnis. In effect, those Sunni Arabs said to themselves, the Shia, the Persians, now have the first jihadi state, the first modern state run by Muslims who believe Islam is supreme and must dominate the world. We Sunnis, we Arabs, need to catch up. From that seed, Al Qaeda would grow. All Islamists, whether Sunni or Shia and whether or not they are active

jihadis, are acutely aware that Islam was, as Bernard Lewis said, once a winner's religion. Among the achievements of Prophet Muhammad was the creation of a community of believers. Some would say [it was] a new nation. The Arabic word is Ummah. Starting out as a small group in seventh century Arabia, within a few generations, the armies of Islam had overrun the Roman and Persian Empires, and established an empire of their own, stretching from Spain to India and beyond into the Pacific. By the year 1000, Islam was on top by all measures; health, wealth, literacy, culture, power. And then something began to go wrong.

Islamist and Nazi Supremacism

To Islamists – and again, I use that term to mean those committed to the goal of Islamic supremacy and in time world domination – it is an article of faith, and I am using that term quite literally, that Muslims lost ground because they strayed from the path of true Islam, the path trod by the Prophet and his companions. Over time they allowed themselves to be seduced and corrupted by the West and its vices, materialism, individualism, and lasciviousness among them. Think back to Sayyid Qutb. Islamists angrily insists that the world's Muslims are under assault by Jews, of course, but also by Christians and other infidels all led by the Great Satan, the United States. The faithful, they add, have a right to defend themselves and no acts no matter how barbaric are forbidden to them.

Have we ever heard anything like this before? We have. In the 20th century, Hitler railed against the victimization of the Germans by Jews and other foreigners. "Terrorism," Hitler once said, quoting here, "is the best political weapon with uncanny prescience," he added, "demoralize the enemy from within by surprise, terror, sabotage, assassination. This is the war of the future." Hitler preached that the Aryans were a master race who would achieve victory in a racial struggle and rule over all other races. By the way, communists preached that the working-class would achieve victory in a class struggle and rule in a dictatorship of the proletariat.

And Islamists preach that Muslims will achieve victory in a religious struggle and will rule over disbelievers and eliminate heretics and apostates. They believe the world is divided. There is the Dar al-Islam, the world ruled by Muslims, and there is the Dar al-Harb, the world ruled by disbelievers, but the more literal meaning of Dar al-Harb [is] realm of war. As the first priority, Muslims must retake the lands that were once conquered and ruled by Muslims, but which are now under infidel control.

Look at any map of Africa and the Middle East today. From Marrakesh to Bangladesh, it is all with the tiny but significant exception of Israel, Dar al-Islam, although they would say that some of those ruling are heretics or apostates. That is why in Islamist eyes there can be no acceptance of a Jewish state or the right of Jews or any other minority to self-determination. There can be no peaceful coexistence. At most there can be a hudnah, a temporary truce.

In the Islamist view, Israel, and much of Spain as well, and parts of Europe are among the lands that Allah gave to the Muslims as an endowment, and which must be taken back one way or another. Jihad is the most direct [way]. To wage or at least support that jihad, they say, is the duty of every Muslim. A Muslim can do his duty, or a Muslim can shirk his duty, but there is no third option, no compromise, no win-win solution that can satisfy this religious obligation.

Islamists offer their followers an incentive [that] the Nazis and the Communists could not, the afterlife. Those who fight and die for Islam become shahids, martyrs, entitled to a seat next to Allah and the attention of 72 black eyed virgins. In case you are wondering, female martyrs spend eternity with the man of their dreams, and by the way, 40 more seats in paradise are reserved to the friends and family of the Shahada.

The 20th century's greatest analyst of mass movements in my opinion may have been Eric Hoffer, a self-educated longshoreman who wrote ten books and won a Presidential Medal of Freedom. In *The True Believer*, published in 1951, he wrote, "though there are differences between the fanatical Christian, the fanatical Muslim," he actually used the term 'Mohammedan,' which is not quite accurate, but "the fanatical nationalist, the fanatical Communist, and the fanatical Nazi, it is yet true that the fanaticism which animates them may be viewed and treated as one. The same is true of the force which drives them on to expansion and world domination." He wrote as well, "The practice of terror serves the true believer, not only to cow and crush his opponents, but also to invigorate and intensify his own faith." [That was written in] '51.

What is to be Done?

So as Lenin would say, *Что делать? sto delat*, what is to be done? I suggested earlier that we need a coherent and comprehensive strategy to defeat these ideologies. We have managed to conceive and implement

such strategies in the past. Our strategy against Nazism was belated and mostly kinetic. To defeat the Nazis and their allies required battles on many fronts from North Africa to the South Pacific to Europe. World War II, though relatively brief, was exceedingly lethal [with] more than 60 million people killed, about 3 percent of the world's population at the time. The Cold War followed. It was much longer, but less kinetic and less lethal, at least for America. I think it is a more apt strategic model for the current global conflict.

In 1946, diplomat George Kennan sent his Long Telegram from Moscow, analyzing Joseph Stalin's ideology and intentions. Largely on this basis, President Truman in 1947 decided to contain the Soviet Union and assist those threatened by communist aggression. Three years after that, a State Defense Policy Review Group was established under the chairmanship of Paul Nitze, director of policy planning in the State Department. That group produced NSC 68, a 58-page National Security Report on the USSR. Its, quote, "Fanatic faith and its determination to impose its absolute authority over the rest of the world."

NSC 68 explained why totalitarians could not sincerely embrace peaceful coexistence. It said, "The United States, as the principal center of power in the non-Soviet world and the bulwark of opposition to Soviet expansion, is the principal enemy whose integrity and vitality must be subverted or destroyed by one means or another if the Kremlin is to achieve its fundamental design." On this basis, President Truman implemented a robust set of policies, including covert actions, psychological warfare, communication strategies, all aimed at weakening the Soviet Union and frustrating its imperialist designs.

But in 1983, President Reagan came to the conclusion that containment had proven insufficient and attempts at détente unavailing. He accused his predecessor, President Carter, of "vacillation, appeasement, and aimlessness." It is sometimes said that President Reagan's strategy was 'we win, they lose.' In fact, that was the desired *outcome*. The essence of his strategy was articulated in National Security Decision 75, and "NSDD-75 was an extraordinarily ambitious, across-the-board assault on the Soviet Union," in the words of Paul Kengor, author of *The Crusader: Ronald Reagan and the Fall of Communism*.

To the disapproval of many academics and State Department officials and journalists, Mr. Reagan would call the Soviet Union an "evil empire" and exert pressure — diplomatic, military, ideological and, not least, economic — on a regime that was neither as strong nor as stable as it looked to most observers, the CIA very much included.

On December 25th, 1991, three years after President Reagan left office, the hammer-and-sickle flag that had flown over Moscow since early in the 20th century would be lowered for the final time, and Boris Yeltsin would be the first President of the Russian Federation. In retrospect, it may appear that the defeat of communism was inevitable. More plausibly, it was the result of Mr. Reagan's revival of national strength and purpose — combined with solid research, analysis, and above all strategic planning.

Many Americans and Europeans disapproved of the project and of Mr. Reagan. They believed the Soviets had a thing or two to teach us about social justice, and they looked forward to communism and capitalism converging. Such people are with us still. They seek to appease our enemies. Not good, as Boris Yeltsin might say.

Conclusion

Can Islamism and the terrorism it inspires be defeated? "The future is unknowable," Churchill recognized, "but the past should give us hope. The past also tells us that prevailing against totalitarians is no walk in the park. It will require strategizing, prioritizing, and sacrificing. Are we in the West up to that task? About Europeans, I have to tell you, I am not at all confident. As for Americans, I hope so, but we are a divided nation right now, deeply divided. Perhaps we can come together again, but that process does not seem to me to be yet underway.

What is underway, inconveniently, is a global revolution, one that threatens free peoples and those who might like to be, and it is led by true believers, Sunni and Shia, who nurture ancient resentments and harbor utopian ambitions. They exhibit a formidable will to power. They have a strategy, and they are prepared to fight a long war. The same needs to be true of us if we are to prevail, if America and the West are to get out of this century alive. And with that, thank you very much. I look forward to a discussion.

Q&A

What is the Solution?

Audience member:

I, of course, agree with your analysis, but programmatically, strategically, what are you proposing? For instance, on simple things, Daniel Pipes says you do not need to ban Muslims, you need to impose a loyalty test to

exclude those who believe in Sharia. Where would you begin this fight against jihadism and Islamism? And you were not clear whether all or the vast majority of Muslims, let us say here in America, so-called peace-loving Muslims belong to one of these two groups?

Clifford May:

[I have] a couple of things. I mean, I think in terms of what we know, and we do not know as much as we ought to, let us assume that no more than 10 percent of the Muslims in the world are Islamists, [a] reasonable thing more or less, but if there are 1.2 billion Muslims, you [have] got a pretty big number there that is against you. And the reformers are a very, very tiny number. [They are] wonderful people, but [it is a] very tiny number. Again, they do not exist for long in the Muslim world. They are in danger in Europe, they can survive here, but how many can we name? Not a whole lot.

And the problem with moderate Muslims is they do not have much impact on the debate, just as you know. I do not think most Germans were Nazis, I do not think most Russians were communists, but it did not really matter because they were not fighting them, they were kind of going along with them, so we do need to take a hard look at our immigration policies. I think there is no question about that. Without going into this a great length, I do have a column today in *The Washington Times*, talking to some extent about this.

Value American Citizenship

And what I say is that, look, the first thing we should do, one of the things we should do, is [value] American citizenship. We should value it, and so when you value something, you do not give it away lightly, you give it away to people who really want it badly and who will make a contribution to this country. You are in a sense inviting them into your home and into your family. And these should be people who want to be Americans in the sense that they want to defend the United States and they wanted to defend the U.S. Constitution, and they believe in the concepts of Liberty and tolerance just like we do.

Right now, we have got a visa lottery. The idea that you can win your way into the country is absolutely outrageous. I also do not believe in this [expansive definition of family reunification]. Family reunification should mean my wife and my kids, and probably very little after that because it becomes a chain. Why should my uncle who is indolent and unskilled get citizenship, but somebody else who has skills and ambition, and an employer wants to give him a job, cannot get in? How is that fair? Why should my uncle who is a Nazi, or an Islamist, or a communist get citizenship [just] because he is my uncle when somebody who says the greatest thing for me in the world would be to live in freedom and to defend freedom? He wants to come here. Is it hard to make these

distinctions? So, I would make it a lot [harder to immigrate through family reunification].

I want immigrants. I want legal immigrants. I think we also need foreign workers. Foreign workers do not have to be citizens necessarily. That is a whole different thing. A lot of people want to come here to make a living, and if there are jobs that Americans do not want to do, and employers cannot find them, let us get people in there with [foreign worker status]. We can have background checks on them and know who they are, and they come here, and they work. And when their job is up, they go home to their families. And if they decide while they are here, 'I want to be a citizen, too, because I love this country,' God bless them. Like everybody else, they make their case that we include them in our club.

So that is a start to it. All these things need to be thought through with the priority of fighting this war, not with ten other priorities out there if we are serious about this. Who do we have in this country, why are they here, who do we want to bring in, who is going to strengthen this country? Does that make some sense? I know it is only a little bit. I know to you it does, but not to too many others.

The Islamic Terrorist Threat in Latin America

Audience member:

You mentioned the inroads of jihadists in Latin America. Could you elaborate a little bit?

Clifford May:

Yeah, what you have got is a Hezbollah, which is a proxy terrorist [group], kind of a Foreign Legion of the Islamic Republic of Iran. They are all over the place in Latin America, and so is Iran itself. Cuba, which is persecuting Christians – recently, a group of Cuban Christians came and met with Commissioners of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. They went back and one of them, a wonderful young man, was detained immediately upon coming back, but a Shia mosque has just been opened in Havana, and they have programs, the Iranians, to bring Latin Americans, particularly Indians to Iran to learn Farsi, and to train, and to be converted. And you have mosques opening up.

And there are various diplomats who are there who we know to be terrorist masters, and others. I mean, what happened in Argentina in 1994. That was carried out by Hezbollah and by Iran, and so we are finding that they are all over the place, particularly in the tri border area, if you have heard of that.

And here is one of the things I find most frightening, and I have heard

about this for years, but we are getting some more information, is the various jihadist groups, mostly Shia but some others, are finding that they have a lot in common. They can cooperate and collaborate very well with organized crime in Latin America, money laundering, arms drugs, all of these things. Imagine the impact of organized crime in Latin America, and we are talking about serious organized crime like they have in Colombia, and jihadist groups coming together and finding that they can work together. This has not gotten enough media attention.

I think there is to some extent in Mexico as well. I do not know exactly to what extent. At some point you have to [specialize in this]. We have got a scholar who does nothing but this, Emanuel Ottolenghi. He is Italian. He speaks Spanish. He has been down there. He has just testified before Congress last week. We do not know nearly as much as we want to know, but yes, we know that Hezbollah, and Iran, and other groups are penetrating and finding [ways to counter our interests]. And thinking that this is our back door, and it has got broken hinges, and this is a way they can fight against us.

Assimilation and Sharia

Audience member:

Would you address assimilation in that should we expect the Muslims in this country to assimilate rather than to have their own Sharia law in parts?

Clifford May:

Yeah, I think there are two parts to this. There is assimilation and integration. People should be proud of their heritage, and they have their own religion and all that, but, yes, if you come here, you should be able to say if you want to be a citizen, the law of the land, the highest law of the land, is the U.S. Constitution. Nothing is higher than that. And by the way, this is also – and this is another discussion, a fight we are having or should have with the transnational progressives who think the UN is a government, an incipient global government of Parliament of Nations. It is not. It should not be. We should not [behave as though it is].

But when Obama has the most consequential nuclear arms limitation treaty or agreement of the century, and he turns down congressional advice and consent, and says I am going instead to the UN, and if the UN blesses it, it is now international law, he is making the UN into a government. I think this is another thing we have to do. [We have to] reform the UN, and part of what I mean is we do not surrender sovereignty to the UN or any international institutions, none.

So, yes, I think there are difficulties. Yes, if you are a Muslim coming here,

you should be able to say that I am living in a land where I respect the law of the land and I respect the Constitution. Now, look, Sharia is a hard subject and, Gordon, you can hold forth in this because on the Left there are those who think, oh, Sharia is nice, it is family law, but on the Right there are those who say Sharia is one thing. I do not agree with that. I mean, if Sharia were one thing, we would not have had for 1400 years the split between the Sunni and the Shia because they differ on what Sharia is, and then there are four schools of Islamic law right now, so there can be different [interpretations of Sharia].

And we should not say, oh, no, there cannot be different interpretations, there can only be one interpretation, and it is the strictest, the jihadists are right. Why would we tell them that? If somebody wants to say I am a good enough Muslim, but you know what, I like glass of wine when I go out to dinner. I do not think we should be the ones who contradict them.

Audience member:

[Can you share] any thoughts you have on how we attack this Gordian knot of the Islamists parading this political ideology under the guise of religion, and therefore take advantage of our entire infrastructure, ideology, legal, etc., that we value protection of religious freedom, and they seem to be very adept at exploiting that? Your thoughts on how we [attack this].

Clifford May:

It is a wicked problem because you are right. Part of it is we understand how to say, in terms of communism or Nazism, that is an odious ideology. When it is a religion, we get all disoriented, all befuddled by it, and so I think it is useful at least to say what I have said here, which is that Islamism is an ideology derived from a theology, okay? Just because you are a Muslim, you do not have to necessarily subscribe to these views. And there are well-known Muslim scholars who would say this, Bassam Tibbi wrote a book called *Islamism and Islam*, and you do not have to agree with a hundred percent of it when he says just because I am a Muslim, I do not have to be an Islamist.

I mean, essentially, I can go out in the most progressive group and rail against white supremacism, and everybody says yeah, thank you, Clifford, very good, but I talk about Islamic supremacism, oh, wow. Why? Are we against supremacism or only certain kinds of supremacism? I do not know, but I think this is part of it, that we have to identify what we are talking about as an ideology, and we have to be against this ideology, and we have to ask Muslims to be without equivocation against this ideology of Islamism, of Islamic supremacy, and moral domination.

Can Cultural Elites Save the West?

Audience member:

Given the secularization of our both academic and political elites, are we structurally in a position to do that, and by that I mean – I spent a career and a half in the military in the national security community. I grew up thinking that the defense of the country was one of the primary functions of government, but given the leadership that we have, I am not talking [about the] administration but our cultural leadership, are we in a position where maybe the government is really not equipped to deal with this, and perhaps non-governmental organizations, like your own, perhaps have a larger role to play in some of this than perhaps the Cold War model might even suggest?

Clifford May:

It is a hard question. I am not sure I have the answer, I am more hopeful about America than I am about Europe at this point because the Europeans do not seem to be capable of defending their civilization or culture. They sort of [are committing] suicide by multiculturalism, and I do think that I am in favor of pluralism, but not multiculturalism, which suggests that all cultures are the same, no culture is better than any other, I have no preferences. Well, if you have no preferences, that is great because some other people do, and since they feel rather strongly about it, they are going to dominate you. Europe is post-Christian, post-democratic. They think their posts [are] historical, but they ain't. They do not understand what is happening to them.

Anyhow, look, we need to wake up to this, and I think you will agree that a lot of what we are talking about today and I think a lot of what I am saying is not what you are going to read in the progressive media, which is a lot of the media, and it is not what kids are being taught on most campuses, and so we need to start to deal with this problem realistically, and it is remarkable that this many years after 9/11, and this many years after the Islamic Revolution that occurred in Iran in '79, we are not able to yet have [this conversation]. I mean, we are here, but in general, [we do not] have candid discussions about these issues and argue about these in public. There are a lot of places where I am sure they would drag me out by my throat.

Taqiyya and Colonization

Audience member:

Considering their use of taqiyya, how would you go about setting up a process to vet them or hold them accountable? They are lying to you.

Clifford May:

Taqiyya is the idea that you can lie to your enemies. Look, I would [say] just to be fair, in any conflict, you lie to your enemies, your enemies lie to you. That is always the case. If you are talking about it in terms of immigration particularly, that is where I say I think we should have a very selective regimen in terms of who comes into this country, very selective and not huge numbers because you can – Bob has a bottle of wine, and I have a glass, and I can still get up here and talk to you, but if I drink the whole bottle, probably not, so we have got to be able to assimilate, we have got to be able to digest what is coming in, right?

I do not know how many. I am not going to [give you a number], but I will tell you that I think, look, when you set up as they have in Europe, ghettos of Muslims, and we have it here in certain places, the Somalis are not being integrated and assimilated, these can become ghettos or they can become colonies, depending [on public policy]. In Europe, I think they are more and more becoming colonies because you have radical clerics who then lay down the law, lay down the Sharia law, say here is what is allowed and here is what is not within our territory. And at that point, those people are not going to become French, or British, or German.

Audience member:

What would you do with Dearborn? What would you do?

Clifford May:

Look, I do not think Dearborn is necessarily the worst because a lot of [other places are worse]. In America, I think we need to be careful going forward, but we are okay right now. The majority of the Middle Easterners we have [who] are Arabs are actually Christian. Now, some of them are anti-Jewish and some of them are anti-Israeli, but I am not going to throw anybody out who is here legally. We do not need to do that, but going forward let us have a policy on immigration that benefits American citizens in our society. Let us start at this point. We have got a lot of people that you and I disagree with vehemently, teaching on our campuses, and not just in Dearborn, but let us think about what we do now. We cannot change the history.

Audience member:

So how do you set up a system to vet people coming from countries that are totally dysfunctional, say like Syria, where it is impossible to know if they were criminals in the past [or] if they committed atrocities? How do you do that?

Clifford May:

I think you pretty much cannot, and where you do not have sufficient information, you probably should not be. Look, first of all, I do not think the solution to the pathologies of the Middle East is to try to identify all the good people, and bring them to America and Europe, and leave those countries to the bad guys. I do not think that is going to work. I do not think that is a plan, and I think it is what a lot of people are talking [about]. I think what we want to do is make it possible for them to stay, and for the good guys to prevail there. Now, that is not an isolationist foreign policy, but I am also not saying that we should be sending a hundred thousand troops. But could you have, and could we have had what are called safe zones, [what] I would call self-protection zones, in parts of Syria? Yes, there actually are some like that, particularly across the border from Israel where the Druze live. Why?

Some of you may know this, some of you may not.

The Druze and Syria

The Druze population of Israel are very, very loyal citizens of Israel. They serve in the military, and the Druze essentially went to the Israeli government, and said our brothers and sisters in Syria are under attack and they are dying, we are going to ask to help. And they said, yeah, we will, and so very quietly, Druze Mountain in the area, they have been trying to help set up these self-protection zones. They are trying to stay out of there so nobody knows, but the various things, equipments, ammunition, weapons get to people who need it. We need to do that.

Look, this is another discussion, [but] the nation-state, the Westphalian principle, is failing in the Middle East. This experiment is not coming out so well less than 100 years later. I do not think Syria will be a state again, I am not sure it ever was a coherent state to begin with, but I do not think it is enough to sit back and watch the fires burn either. And I do not think it had to get as bad as it has gotten, more than five hundred thousand dead, more than five million displaced or refugees. You know, it is really a shocking thing that Samantha Power, who literally wrote the book on genocide and said we cannot be bystanders to genocide, was a member of Obama's cabinet and the UN Ambassador, presiding over genocide in the Middle East. And evidently, Obama when she brought that up a couple times – did you hear about this? – and Obama said to her, Samantha, we have all read your book. She should have resigned. She did not. "We read your book."

